

435 MSS/DPC Civilian Personnel Flight



For US Civilian Employees and Their Supervisors
<http://www.ramstein.af.mil/435mss/cpo>

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Message from the Civilian Personnel Officer

It is that time of the year for another update from your friendly Civilian Personnel Officer. We are in the middle of the summer season with the dog-days of August ahead of us. Hope everyone is having an opportunity to enjoy life in the overseas area.

As you try to manage the heat and keep cool, always remember safety in everything you and your family do. As you have heard through the past weeks, we are in the 101 Critical Days of Summer. Be sure to be safe and think “safe” in everything you do—at work, home, vacation, or enjoying time within our communities. Take time to discuss safety with your friends and family by staying alert and knowing what is happening around you.

This issue of the US Civilian Personnel Newsletter brings you a lot of information and updates concerning subjects that touch most all functional areas of your US civilian personnel life. Take the time to review, familiarize yourself with what is happening and how best to prepare. If you have any questions, send them to me, or better yet, go directly to the author of the article. All of my staff may be reached via e-mail by using the Ramstein global listing or call my office (480-2052) to find out their extension if you prefer to call.

Also, your feedback concerning this issue is valued and I highly encourage you to forward any suggestions for improvements to me directly.

Until next time...

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//SIGNED//

MARCIA H. MILLER

Civilian Personnel Officer

435 MSS/DPC 480-2052

US Affirmative Employment

Express Referral Service

Many of you may have heard about the 120-day test of the Express Referral Service (ERS) - a concept that was designed to improve the civilian personnel cycle time for candidate referral, i.e., the time it takes to get certificates to managers for selection. The ERS concept represents a significant departure from the traditional approach of doing candidate referral for U.S. civilian positions and affects both internal and external recruitment sources (excluding AF Career Program positions). The overall objective of the test was to streamline the referral process, and shave days or perhaps weeks from the time it takes to get a list of candidates into the hands of the selecting official. This was an item that was briefed to Group and Deputy Commanders at the January Wing Civilian Resources Corporate Board in January 04.

As you may know, under the traditional referral method, the Human Resource (HR) Specialist screens every applicant's background/education against OPM qualification standards and other requirements to determine each applicant's qualifications and eligibility to be referred for the specific position. Under this approach, only qualified and eligible candidates are referred to the selecting official. This is a time consuming and labor intensive process for the HR specialist, depending upon the number of applicants for a particular job. Delays in getting lists to selecting officials results in delays in employee entrance on duty dates.

Under the ERS concept, candidates are referred to selecting officials very quickly, normally within days after the vacancy announcement closes. The process entails:

- Minimal screening of candidates - primarily to establish eligibility for appointment in overseas area;
- Selecting officials make *tentative* selections based on their assessment of the applicants, with a first and second alternate;
- Qualification determinations are made *after* management makes their *tentative* selection; and
- The final qualification determination and entry on duty are expedited since, in most cases, the Human Resource specialist has only one resume to screen for qualifications (the tentative selectee) vs. all of them. If the tentative selectee is not qualified, then the HR specialist reviews the qualifications of the first alternate, and, if necessary the second alternate.

The bases that participated in the 120-test were Spangdahlem AB, RAF Lakenheath, RAF Mildenhall and the Regional Personnel Center at Sembach. Overall managers and HR

Specialists were pleased with the test; however, there were some mixed results, so HQ USAFE/A1 (Civilian Personnel) extended the testing opportunity to the rest of the USAFE bases.

The Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight has agreed to test this new process for six months, which began 3 May 04. At the end of the test period, the results will be reevaluated to determine the best way ahead for USAFE. ~Laura Young, DPCS

Changes to Referral Certificate Suspense

Effective 15 May 04, the suspense for civilian referral certificates changed from 30 to 20 days. This process change is in support of the DoD Business Initiatives Council where the SECAF asked the DP community to reduce the time required to fill civilian positions. A value stream analysis held in Dec 03 examined the length of time a selecting official uses to make his/her decision on whom to hire. The team studying this portion of the civilian fill process found selection decisions take an average of 41 days. Requests for extensions may be approved by the wing commander or designee, normally for no greater than 10 days. Extensions should be limited and not routinely granted. The selecting official is responsible for obtaining the extension and notifying the personnel specialist listed on the referral certificate prior to the expiration date listed. If a selection or notification of an extension is not transmitted to the personnel specialist, the Request for Personnel Action will be returned the next business day to the selecting official without action for resubmission. ~Laura Young, DPCS

New Vacancy Announcement Process

In an effort to improve the civilian personnel referral cycle time, e.g., cutting the time it takes to get referrals to selecting officials, the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight (435MSS/DPC) recently changed our vacancy announcement process. Previously, position announcements opened on Friday for five workdays and, generally, closed the following Thursday. On 12 Apr 04, Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight (435MSS/DPC) began the process of opening position announcements any day of the work-week for a minimum of five workdays.

The AF process of self-nominating/applying for AF civilian appropriated funds positions will remain the same. Current permanent, "internal" AF US appropriated funds civilian employees must continue to "self-nominate" for specific Air Force positions posted on the Air Force Personnel Center, Civilian Personnel Operations (AFPC/DPC) website. This can be easily accomplished by accessing the HQ AFPC Civilian Employment Home Page at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/resweb/> or the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) Job Line 00-800-1997-2378 (from Europe). Locally available "external" candidates, e.g., non-employed family members, temporary employees, Army and other

federal agency US civilian employees, NAF/AAFES employees, etc., will continue to

apply for Ramstein-serviced announcements by submitting an application package at the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight Customer Service Counter, Building 2120, Room 123.

As a reminder, AF internal civilian appropriated funds employees and any candidates applying for external positions at US locations may register in CANS (Civilian Announcement Notification System). This system allows for an automatic job search based on criteria the individual AF civilian employee establishes for themselves. By registering in CANS, you will no longer have to continually check for Air Force job vacancies. If there are any matches, an email will be sent to you listing the job announcement number, description, pay plan, occupational series, grade, job location, closing date and the announcement for which "self-nomination" must be initiated if consideration is desired. As a safeguard; however, you may wish to continue checking the AFPC/DPC job website on a weekly basis. Individuals may register in CANS by accessing <https://ww2.afpc.randolph.af.mil/resweb/cans.htm>.

Another change that was recently implemented in an effort to improve the civilian personnel referral time is that many announcements will now indicate that they will be used for 90-days to fill subsequent "like" positions (i.e., same pay plan, series, grade, title, skill codes) at the base location.

If you have questions, please contact your servicing Staffing Specialist at DSN 480-7055 or commercial 06371-47-7055. ~Laura Young, DPCS

Career Program Name Requests

Several Career Programs are now using the option of "name requests" in conjunction with internal placements. This allows an employee to be selected without requiring the selecting official to consider all of the candidates who self nominate for the position. It does; however, require an announcement, all interested employees to self-nominate (including the name requested candidate) and the employee to be among the group of "best qualified" candidates who would have been referred on a certificate. This provision applies to in-service placements only.

Name requests are a viable management tool which in no way circumvents the merit promotion process. All employees who self nominate are rated and ranked according to ranking criteria. Only when the employee is within reach and among the best qualified after competitive procedures have been applied is the name request referred for selection.

Listed below are the programs that have elected to honor name requests in the staffing of

their positions:

- Financial Management Career Program
- Manpower Civilian Career Program
- Program Management Career Program

- Intelligence Career Program
- Civilian/Military Personnel Career Program
- Contracting Career Program*
- Security Career Program*
- Communications-Information Career Program
- Scientist and Engineer Career Program*
- Services Career Program*

*These career programs will utilize name requests for certain actions/positions. Your servicing Human Resources Specialist can contact the career program representative for specific information on when alternate certification will be authorized.

Please note that if a Career Program is not listed above, they have elected not to use name requests at this time.

Questions concerning the use of name requests may be directed to your servicing Human Resources Specialist at DSN 480-7092, 435 MSS/DPCS, Bldg 2120. ~Laura Young, DPCS

New Survey Shows that Agencies aren't Effectively Using Hiring Flexibilities, Says OPM (as Reported in Fedmanager: Tuesday, June 8, 2004)

A new government-wide survey on the federal hiring process shows that agencies are not using human resources flexibilities and tools to the extent they should, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) says. The survey, titled "Working for America: Agency Survey on Improving Federal Hiring," finds that the flexibilities and tools granted by OPM to expedite quality hires are not being used effectively by agencies, and they are not being used to the fullest extent possible.

When asked to identify internal barriers and outmoded practices that interfere with hiring the best candidates in a timely fashion, OPM says that the most frequent response offered is that hiring officials and program managers too often act as competitors, rather than as teammates with common interests and goals. The survey also found that factions within agencies often compete against each other, rather than come together in a common interest and single goal.

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The survey was completed in May by 45 federal agencies. It is scheduled for release this week.

Managers: If you have questions about hiring flexibilities and how to get the best candidates for your positions, contact the Affirmative Employment Section at DSN 480-7055. ~Laura Young, DPCS

Employee/Management Relations

Civilian Records Retention In Support Of Class Action Lawsuit

This is an Important Reminder Notice for USAF Civilian Supervisors:

You may recall being informed of this requirement from our CPO Newsletter and Key Manager Email in Sep 03. Are you a supervisor of a US Air Force civilian appropriated fund employee? Do you handle records pertaining to US Air Force civilian employees? HQ USAF/JA and HQ USAF/DP issued a directive that requires documents/records dealing with the management of Air Force civilians be retained until a date to be determined. The directive was put into place because of a class action lawsuit alleging discrimination based on race, sex, and age. The directive does not apply to Non-appropriated funded or local national employee records.

The type of records this action covers includes any and all documents, papers, reports, notes, memoranda, e-mails or other material – hard copy, electronic, final copy and drafts dealing with the management and supervision of civilians. This includes perpetual and transitory type files. Additionally, records already in staging or due for destruction are included. The main points of interest at the unit level are in documents dealing with the supervisory record, appraisals, awards, and other employment actions.

The specific civilian records subject matter areas of concern, as identified by HQ USAF/JA and HQ USAF/DP memo, dated 17 May 2003, are listed below:

- All performance appraisals, periodic performance reviews (or feedback) and any reports concerning appraisals and their distributions
- All “971 files” and documents therein (do not purge any documents therein)
- All merit promotion files including all certificates, interview notes, staff summary sheets, and any materials or other documents regarding candidate’s qualifications or selection, and any other documents (i.e., all promotion or

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competitive staffing actions), any reports concerning promotions and their distributions, staffing or any other documents of any sort that make any representation of “under representation” of any group and any other documents relating to the same

- All files and matters relating to disciplinary actions

- All files and matters relating to RIFs
- All performance award documentation (cash and time-off awards) and any reports concerning performance awards and their distributions
- Employee lists (name lists)
- Affirmative employment activities/affirmative action documents (includes policies, briefings, status reports), accomplishment reports, staffing recommendations (if any), updates on any topic regardless of whether or not it directly relates to the above listed topics, and any communication from or to affirmative employment staff regarding appraisal, promotion, hiring, or bonus decisions, and any communication or document referring to “under-representation” of a group defined by race and/or gender (sex)
- Spreadsheets, databases, or other data storage means, in both electronic and any hard copy form pertaining to the above list

Records that fit the above category must be retained regardless of the original disposition. When applicable records meet their normal eligibility for destruction, the records must be handled according to instructions provided by the Civilian Personnel Flight or transferred to the Base Records Staging facility (through your Base Records Advisor, 835 CS/SCSIR). The Civilian Personnel Flight has incorporated procedures into civilian out-processing which requires the turnover of the AF Form 971 and Employee Performance Files (generally all of the Supervisor’s Employee Work Folder) to 435 MSS/DPCE. Employees may obtain a copy of *Out-processing Instructions and Checklist* from 435 MSS/DPCS, Ramstein Air Base, building 2120, Room 125.

The Civilian Personnel Flight will also collect and maintain documents on employment selection; all interview notes and any matrices or other related documents regarding candidate’s qualifications, consideration, and selection/non-selection for vacancies and awards; all performance documentation, cash and time-off awards; and any reports concerning performance awards and their distributions. Documents/records pertaining to interview and selection of employees should be forwarded to 435 MSS/DPCS, US Affirmative Employment office, Unit 3220 Box 365, APO AE 09094 or contact them at DSN 480-7055. Documents/records pertaining to performance awards should be forwarded to 435 MSS/DPCE, Employee Management Relations, Unit 3220 Box 365, APO AE 09094 or contact them at DSN 480-2008.

Any records removed from an individual personnel file or other file maintaining records on civilian personnel must be placed in a parallel file and marked: “For the Purpose of Class Action: Destruction Authority: FROZEN – Subject to Possible Litigation Action

Effective April 2003.” Perpetual records, those having retentions of, destroy when no longer needed, or destroy when superseded, obsolete or no longer needed, must be maintained and are authorized for storage in the staging facility managed by the Ramstein Air Base Records Management office, based upon volume and storage requirements.

If you have any questions or concerns on the retention or disposition of civilian records, please contact your unit Records Custodian or Functional Area Records Manager. If you need further guidance, feel free to contact the Base Records Management office, 835 CS/SCSIR, DSN 489-6979. ~Gerry Berger, DPCE

Now That the Performance Period is Over

Another appraisal cycle is over and a new one is beginning. Supervisors need to constantly be seeking ways to motivate employees. Although it seems like just another task to pile onto an already full plate, a few practices in this area can yield extraordinary long term dividends. Two such practices are: (1) setting and communicating clear objectives, and (2) giving immediate positive feedback.

By setting and communicating clear objectives, you let your employees know in plain terms what is expected of them and what criteria will be used to evaluate their performance. AFI 36-1001, paragraph 1.8 requires the rating official and employee to meet at the beginning of each appraisal period to discuss the employee's approved performance elements and standards in the plan. The employee and rating official each sign the performance plan and the employee is provided a copy (each year). This practice serves two purposes: (1) it facilitates employee understanding of project responsibilities, and (2) it saves time and expense associated with having to redo parts of a project due to miscommunication or unclear directions. It also provides valuable documentation if a problem develops.

The second practice, immediate positive feedback for a job well done, can work wonders for an employee's confidence and the morale of your organization. Although it may sound surprising to supervisors, many employees may not know that they are doing a fine job unless someone tells them. By rewarding your employees for a job well done, it reinforces the efforts of their labor, motivating them to continue their excellent work. And, contrary to popular opinion, the compliment does not prevent the supervisor from holding the employee accountable if something substandard is done at a later time. Remember to criticize in private and compliment in public.

By setting and communicating clear objectives to employees and providing immediate positive feedback, you can help create a workforce that has greater career satisfaction and, in turn, does its job better, making your job easier and more enjoyable. ~Pam Schlegel, DPCE

*First Open Season for Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance
(FEGLI) in Five Years!*

The FEGLI 2004 Open Season will be held from September 1 through September 30, 2004, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the program.

During the open season, Federal employees in eligible positions will be able to enroll in the FEGLI program or increase or change current coverage without having a physical or answering any questions about their health. The earliest that newly elected coverage will be effective is September 1, **2005**.

The FEGLI program consists of basic life insurance coverage and three options that include coverage for up to five times an employee's base salary plus coverage for family members. In most cases, a new Federal employee is automatically covered by basic life insurance. The types and amounts of coverage available are not changing.

We will share more information about this, closer to the start of the Open Season on September 1, 2004. In the interim, for additional information on the FEGLI program in general please see: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/> or you may contact your Benefits and Entitlement Service Team (BEST) counselor (<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/BEST/automated.htm>). ~Ollie Wilson, DPCE

Medical Documentation Must be Kept Separate from Employee's AF Form 971 Folder

Last year, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) held in a Dept of the Air Force case that the Air Force violated the record-keeping provisions of the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations, which require that all information regarding the medical condition or medical history of an employee be maintained in files separate from an employee's work folder or AF Form 971. Due to this recent case, this information is provided so that all supervisors may delete medical information from the content of their AF Form 971 Folders on their employees if such information no longer applies or establish a separate medical file.

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The facts of the case indicate that the supervisor placed a doctor's note in the work folder that he maintained and when the employee returned to full duty and was reassigned to work for another supervisor, the doctor's note was not withdrawn. The employee filed an EEO complaint and EEOC concluded that the placement of the letter violated the Rehabilitation Act's prohibitions against improper disclosure of confidential medical information, even though the employee was not a person with a disability.

EEOC based its decision on separate federal law which states that information regarding the medical condition or history of any employee shall be collected and maintained on separate forms and in separate medical files and that it shall be treated as a confidential

medical record, except that supervisors and managers may be informed regarding necessary restrictions on the work or duties of the employee and necessary accommodations.

While the EEOC's decision may seem overly broad based on the facts of the case, Air Force personnel must respect it and properly comply with the provisions of the law. To that end, here is a quick run-down of the applicable rules when dealing with confidential medical information in the workplace for any employee, whether disabled or not:

- The information must be kept in a medical file – separate from the AF Form 971 file or personnel files.
- The information may be passed (by management officials) to the new supervisor IF the information regards necessary restrictions on the work or duties of the employee; and
- The material need not be destroyed or returned to the employee, but must be kept in a medical file and used only when necessary.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact your Employee Relations Specialist at 480-2008. ~Gerry Berger, DPCE

Going on Leave Without Pay or Separating from Federal Service?

As you depart Ramstein Air Base (RAB) via Leave Without Pay (LWOP) or separation, it is critical that you 1) out process from the base and 2) understand the benefits available to you regarding your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI), Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), unemployment compensation and retirement contributions. Out processing checklists should be picked up 45 days prior to departure by contacting the Customer Service Office, Bldg 2120, Room 123, 480-7092.

In an effort to ensure your departure from RAB is smooth, the Employee Management Relations Section (DPCE) of the Civilian Personnel Flight (435 MSS/DPC) designed a

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Benefits Checklist for Leave Without Pay (LWOP) and Separating Employees. This checklist consolidates all necessary resources into one document. It is easily obtained from anywhere in the world by clicking on "LWOP and Separating Employees" at the following web address: http://www.ramstein.af.mil/435mss/cpo/US_PROGRAM/us_program_info.htm. It is important that you take the time to explore the wealth of information provided to you via this checklist. These resources supply you with essential information and guidance on TSP, FEGLI, FEHB, unemployment compensation, retirement contributions and much more. You are encouraged to take the time to review the resources made available to you so you do not miss your opportunity to utilize benefits entitled to you.

Questions regarding departing the base via LWOP or separation should be directed to Ms. Marita Vaeth at DSN 480-2008 or maria.vaeth@ramstein.af.mil. ~Marita Vaeth, DPCE

ORGAN DONATION

Have you ever thought about becoming an organ and/or tissue donor? Each day, about 70 Americans receive a transplant, but another 16 on the waiting list die because not enough organs are available. Over 84,000 people are now on the waiting list.

The Government's leave programs support organ donation. An employee may use up to 7 days of paid leave each calendar year to serve as a bone-marrow donor. An employee also may use up to 30 days of paid leave each calendar year to serve as an organ donor. Leave for bone marrow and organ donation is a separate category of leave that is available in addition to annual and sick leave.

The length of absence for organ donation procedures will vary depending upon the medical circumstances of each case. For medical procedures and recuperation requiring absences longer than 30 days, we encourage management to continue to accommodate employees by granting additional time off in the form of sick and/or annual leave, advanced sick and/or annual leave, donated annual leave or leave without pay.

Employees can learn about organ and tissue donation by going to www.organdonor.gov/signup1.html. There they can download an Organ/Tissue Donor Card and sign up to become a donor. ~Pam Schlegel, DPCE

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Hurt on the Job And Paid for Your Medical Expenses Out of Your Own Pocket?

The Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) is required to pay for your covered medical treatment in relation to job related injuries or illnesses (JRI) and also to reimburse you for any out-of-pocket covered medical expenses you have paid.

In the past, depending on what type of JRI you sustained, there were three different forms in use to claim medical reimbursement. In an effort to unify the process, OWCP developed the form OWCP-915, Claim for Medical Reimbursement, to replace the other

three forms. The OWCP-915 provides a standardized format for you to bill OWCP for recovery of fees paid in connection with your treatment.

Completed OWCP-915s should be forwarded to 435 MSS/DPC, ATTN: Ms. Marina Kappler or Ms. Ollie Wilson, Unit 3220 Box 365, APO AE 09094 or hand carried to Ms. Kappler or Ms. Wilson at Bldg 2120, Room 219, Ramstein Air Base. You can find OWCP-915 form at: <http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/owcp/OWCP-915.pdf>. You can also check the status of your claim on-line at: <https://owcp.dol.acs-inc.com/portal/main.do> 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. If you do not have internet access, you can call 1-866-335-8319 between 8am and 8pm, Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Questions concerning the Workers' Compensation Program may be directed to Ms. Kappler (marina.kappler@ramstein.af.mil) or Ms. Wilson (ollie.wilson@ramstein.af.mil) at DSN 480-4212. ~Marina Kappler, DPCE

Premium Reimbursement for Activated DoD Employees

Department of Defense employees now can claim retroactive reimbursement for Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) Plan premiums paid when called to active duty as reserve component members. Eligibility requirements are that the employee must have been a civilian employee of DoD when activated; must have been called on or after 8 Dec 95, to support a contingency operation as defined in section 101(a) (13) of Title 10, US Code; must have been placed on leave without pay or separated from Federal civilian service to perform active duty; and must have served for more than 30 consecutive days for each reimbursement period. For more information, please visit <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/res-emp-info.htm>. In addition, current employees may call by dialing the toll-free AT&T direct access number for the country in which located, then 800-997-2378, press 2 for civilian, and then press 2 for Benefits and Entitlements. Benefits counselors are available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Central Standard Time. ~Ollie Wilson, DPCE

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Could This Be You?

Mrs. Z has been an Air Force employee for 10 years. She has used her sick leave as quick as it was earned. If she felt slightly bad in the morning, had a mild headache, her bunions hurt or anything hurt, she would call in requesting sick leave. After all, she earned the leave so she should be allowed to take it anytime she wished.

Mrs. Z doesn't quite feel that way anymore. You see, Mrs. Z was in a very serious accident last month which will require being absent from work for three months. This is a very serious problem since her widower's pension is only \$300 per month. Her income is vital to the support of her family of four.

Mrs. Z requested advanced sick leave from her supervisor. After coordinating with DPCE, the supervisor denied her request. In making this determination, the supervisor considered the employee's prior sick and annual leave history which was not good. Mrs. Z had no sick leave and only 20 hours annual leave.

Well, Mrs. Z wasn't completely outdone. She remembered the leave transfer program. This program allows an employee who has a personal emergency and is without leave to receive transferred leave directly from other employees. Surely there would be fellow coworkers and base employees who would donate leave to her. Anyone could see her situation was definitely a personal emergency.

The proper forms were completed and the organization and base queried for donations. However, none were obtained. Mrs. Z couldn't believe this. How could they do this to her! How dare they be so stingy and not share their leave in her time of need. Mrs. Z has failed to realize that the decision to donate or not donate leave is an employee's right.

Needless to say, Mrs. Z will go through a very rough three month period. Hopefully, this experience will make her all the wiser when it comes to leave usage in the future.

The next time you decide to call in requesting sick leave because your supervisor made you mad, a coworker hurt your feelings or there's a TV program you want to see, think about Mrs. Z. ~Gerry Berger, DPCE

So You've Made Up Your Mind That You're Going to Retire?

Good, now you have to decide what day do you want your retirement to be effective? You can retire on any day of the week you want to, even on a holiday and at any point

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during a pay period. However, you need to keep one thing in mind. There are rules that govern when a retirement annuity starts and they are different for employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS).

If you are a FERS employee, even one with five or more years of prior CSRS service, you must separate from the service no later than the last day of a month if you want your annuity to start the following month. For example, you'd need to leave by October 31 if you want to receive an annuity for November. If you missed that last day of the month cutoff, your annuity wouldn't start until December. What a difference a day makes!

If you are a CSRS employee, you may retire up to the third day of the month and still receive an annuity for that month. Of course, each day you wait before retiring reduces the amount of your annuity by one day. For example, if you separate on July 3, the amount of your July annuity would be based on 27 days. I know that July has 31 days in it; however, for annuity purposes, OPM divides the year into twelve 30-day months.

That way the monthly annuity payments are steady. They don't rise and fall depending on the length of a given month.

So, now that you have this information you can complete your Request for Personnel Action, SF-52 and application for retirement. ~Sue Lena Gantt, DPCE

Election Time – the Right Time to Review Key Rules Regarding Civilian Political Activities

With the upcoming national elections, you may have questions concerning participation in political activities. On 21 Jan 04, the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued guidance regarding political activity to the services. The following information is a summary of that guidance and addresses some of the more common questions that often arise regarding participation in political activities.

Federal Civilian Employees May:

- Run for non-partisan office (an office where a political party may not designate candidates);
- Display political signs, stickers or buttons (but not while on duty, in a Government office or building, or using a Government vehicle);

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- Assist in voter registration drives, canvass for votes, or circulate a partisan nominating petition;
- Express opinions about candidates and issues (including the use of work email to discuss political subjects in a manner similar to water-cooler conversations –but may not use work email to send messages to a high number of people with whom they have minimal relationship for the purpose of encouraging the recipient to support or oppose a candidate, party, or partisan group);
- Make financial political contributions;
- Attend, address, or be a featured guest at a political fundraiser;
- Attend and be active at a political convention, rally, caucus, or meeting;
- Take an active part in a political campaign;
- Manage a political campaign;
- Distribute campaign literature in partisan elections;
- Serve as an officer in political party or partisan group.

Federal Civilian Employees May Not:

- Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election

- Solicit or discourage political activity of anyone with business before their agency;
- Solicit or receive political contributions (except in certain limited situations by federal labor);
- Run for office in partisan elections (however, may run as independent candidates in certain local elections);
- Engage in political activity while on duty or while in a government office, building or vehicle.

An excellent resource is the website for the Office of Special Counsel at http://www.osc.gov/ha_fed.htm ~Gerry Berger, DPCE

EMERGENCY VISITATION TRAVEL (EVT)

EVT is authorized to allow eligible employees and/or family member(s) stationed at an overseas duty location to travel to the Continental US (CONUS) or the non-foreign Outside CONUS (OCONUS) area (which includes locations like Hawaii, Puerto Rico, etc.) for a family emergency.

Eligible are:

- employees who are US Citizens assigned to an OCONUS foreign area duty location who have a transportation agreement that provides for their return travel to their actual residence in CONUS.

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- The above mentioned employee's spouse or children that are part of his/her household.

Family Emergencies Include:

- a serious illness or injury of an immediate family member
- death of an immediate family member
- special family circumstances

Immediate Family Members are Defined as:

- Employee's spouse and parents thereof
- Employee's Children, including adopted children and spouses thereof
- Employee's Parents
- Employee's Brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof
- Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship

Serious Illness or Injury are Defined as:

- An injury or illness from which, based on competent medical opinion, death is imminent or likely to occur, or
- An illness or injury during which the absence of the employee and/or family member(s) would result in great personal hardship

Allowable Transportation Expenses are the transportation costs from the airport serving the employee's Permanent Duty Station (PDS) to the airport serving the destination authorized for EVT and return. Also allowable are airport taxes and transportation between airports.

The agency may pay, or the employee may be reimbursed for those expenses. Payments are authorized under the Joint Travel Regulation (JTR) Volume 2, Chapter 6, Part O.

NOTE: Per Diem, excess baggage or unaccompanied baggage charges are not payable or reimbursable!

Please contact your servicing Civilian Personnel Office, Employee and Management Relations Section, DSN 480-2196 for more information on the subject or how to request EVT. ~Hans Peter Voss, DPCE

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Classification

Other Duties as Assigned

Federal employees sometimes are reluctant, may even refuse at times, to perform assignments. Such reluctance or refusal is based on an erroneous idea that an employee is not required to perform any duty "that's not in my job description." The Office of Personnel Management reminds all employees that this concept could not be further from the truth.

A position description does not require, nor should it contain, a detailed description covering every feature of the position and the conditions under which it will be performed. A position description is adequate if it sets out the principal duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships in such a way that the job may be properly classified.

The position description is not a prescription of duties; it is simply a report of the major duties of a given position as they exist at any given time. It in no way interferes with the

lawful authority of a supervisor to assign other (minor) duties, i.e., **minor duties performed occasionally or for a small amount of time need not be included in the position description.**

The supervisor may assign work to a person who, by virtue of capabilities, experience, work load, and the situation of the moment, is most able to assume the task, regardless of whether it is considered a higher or lower grade than that of the position currently held by the individual. The task may be related to the work normally assigned to the position or it may be completely unrelated. The only requirement is that the employee is capable of performing the task without a hazard to self or others, or damage to expensive equipment or buildings. ~Bruce Novak, DPCC

The Supervisor's Role in Position Classification

The following are a few tips on your responsibilities in Position Classification:

DON'T PROMISE A PROMOTION: Beware of promising an employee a promotion before you have a classified position which the employee MAY be promoted to. Wait until the position is properly classified to avoid any problems, and even then, you should not promise a particular person the promotion.

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HOW TO HANDLE POSITION AUDITS: Have all the facts ready before the classifier comes to see you. Try analyzing the duties yourself to determine the difficulties and responsibilities of the job. Be sure the classifier understands these features; he or she will need all the information you can provide. This information and the OPM classification guides help the classifier in determining if the position warrants upgrading, downgrading, or if it should remain as it is.

REQUEST FOR POSITION REVIEWS: Unless there are substantial grounds for a change in a position description, i.e., change in mission, etc., which is the basis for the change, please do not attempt to reward or retain employees by attempting to upgrade the position. Consider rewarding employees through the incentive awards programs that are available to you. The classifier cannot consider such things as: how much private industry pays; how efficient, loyal, or understanding the employee is; how much work he/she does; etc. The classifier looks at the difficulties and responsibilities of the work itself.

KEEP THE CLASSIFIER INFORMED: Since pay is determined by grades, please report any substantial changes in the duties and responsibilities of the job, including percentages of time, so that the employee who is performing those duties can be properly credited. If you feel or know the position description does not accurately describe the work performed, call on the classifier assigned to your organization for assistance in preparing a more accurate position description. ~Bruce Novak, DPCC

